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ABSTRACT

This research project attempts to provide a basis for systematizing the book ordering process by collecting data on the performance of suppliers now used to provide various types of monographic publications and by evaluating this data in terms of speed, reliability, and cost. Information was gathered from copies of orders for materials which arrived between January 1 and May 1, 1977. Data pertinent to the study included dates of order and receipt, the supplier, the publisher, and discount policies. Based on an analysis of the data, the book jobber is preferred on non-rush trade and university press items because of low cost. Direct ordering from publishers provides the best service on rush orders for which price is not a factor. Data tables and a bibliography are included. (Author/JAB)

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AN EVALUATION OF BOOK SUPPLIERS USED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF DENVER LIBRARY

A Research Paper

Presented to

The Faculty of the Graduate School

of Librarianship

University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Jo Ann Hanson

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

by

Jo Ann Hanson

June 1977

IR005962

ABSTRACT

This research project attempts to provide a basis for systematizing the book-ordering process at the University of Denver Library by collecting data on the performance of suppliers now used to provide various types of monographic publications and by evaluating this data in terms of speed, reliability, and cost.

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

One problem involved in the book-ordering process in a large, research-oriented library is the fact that little guidance is available in choosing suppliers for various types of monographic material. This process is usually accomplished through trial and error by each individual librarian.

The choice of a supplier for books currently being produced by major publishers is fairly simple. These may usually be obtained most inexpensively from a wholesale book dealer. The librarian's only task is to choose the jobber which offers the best discount coupled with good service, although this choice may involve a problem in deciding how much service may be sacrificed to obtain a lower price. The problems are even greater, however, when dealing with less common materials. Although the best service may often be obtained by ordering directly from the publisher, this is not always true. For example, the publisher may have prepayment requirements not known to the librarian or may be unwilling to handle small orders.

Because of the individual character of the acquisitions process, this study has been limited to Penrose Library at the University of Denver.

The purpose of this study was to develop a basis for ordering decisions based on an analysis of the service of the sources of monographs used by the library over a period of several months. Factors studied were length of time from order to receipt of material (hereafter called "delivery time") and discounts allowed.

Objectives and Hypotheses

Objectives of this study included attempting to answer the following questions--

(1) How good is the service being received from the library's principal vendors in terms of speed, reliability, and cost?

(2) How do these vendors rate in relation to various types of materials?

(3) How does direct ordering compare with ordering through vendors for various types of materials?

To the extent possible, all monograph suppliers used by the library were studied. The term "suppliers" was taken to mean all sources of materials ordered--whether jobber, publisher, or distributor. The terms "jobber" and "vendor" were used synonymously for wholesale book dealers. Materials studied included any orders directed through the monograph receiving desk, including occasional microforms and educational kits, but excluding those continuations for which no individual order existed and also excluding government documents.

Publishers were divided into categories on the assumption that current, in-print publications of each publisher are equally available and that variation enters in because of the size or availability of the publisher. To avoid subjectivity in the assignment of publishers to categories, they were divided on the basis of their listing in the latest edition of Literary Market Place.[1] On this basis, publishers were categorized as trade, university press, non-trade, or non-commercial. In one case, the number of orders from university presses was not large enough to be considered separately. In this case, university presses were considered as non-trade publishers along with association presses, reprint publishers, textbook publishers, and other specialty publishers. These are in opposition to trade publishers, which sell to a wider market. Publishers not list in Literary Market Place--largely associations publishing less than three titles per year--were considered "non-commercial."

Hypotheses tested by the study were: (1) that wholesale book dealers are a less expensive method of obtaining current materials from commercial publishers, but that they must be monitored closely for errors and be backed up by other suppliers and (2) that non-current and non-trade materials and rush orders are best ordered directly from publishers or from specialized vendors, but that up-to-date directories and other information must be used to select the best source for each order.

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[1] Literary Market Place (New York, R. R. Bowker, 1976).

Background

Penrose Library is a centralized facility serving the academic community of the University of Denver, a privately-endowed institution with an enrollment of 7,800 students, 40 percent of whom are graduate students. Because of the extent and diversity of the university's graduate programs, it has been the policy of the library to acquire as much as possible of the scholarly material announced by the Publishers' Weekly Weekly Record, Choice, and the New York Times Review of Books, backed up by Library of Congress proof sheets for more esoteric material. Requests from faculty members may also include foreign and retrospective material.

The majority of the library's domestic orders are placed through the Baker and Taylor Company, a large, nation-wide book wholesaler. An established vendor is used for monographs from each foreign country. Most other orders are placed directly with publishers. This may be because the publisher does not deal with wholesalers, because the order is for ephemeral material not well-serviced by a wholesaler, or because it is a rush order or a local publisher.

Recently, the library has been conducting an experiment in ordering more monographic material from Blackwell North America, a firm which has proved to give excellent service in the area of serial publications. These orders form a part of this study.

CHAPTER II. RELATED RESEARCH

Much of the literature related to this problem consists of chapters in general texts on library acquisitions. These works, for example The Acquisition of Library Materials by Stephen Ford,[1] were consulted for an overview of the standards expected in the relations between librarians and book dealers. The American Library Association's Guidelines for Handling Library Orders for In-Print Monographic Publications[2] also provided background information. The problem with these works is that they necessarily describe simplified and ideal situations. The librarian is often simply advised to find a reliable vendor to use for the majority of monographic orders.

There have been very few scientific studies on the subject of book ordering. Many of the articles which discuss this topic are subjective accounts of one librarian's experience. One of the few recently-published objective studies on the problem of selecting book suppliers was done by Ung Chon Kim at the Indiana University Libraries.[3] This study

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[1]Stephen Ford, The Acquisition of Library Materials (Chicago, American Library Association, 1973).

[2]American Library Association, Guidelines for Handling Library Orders for In-Print Monographic Publications (Chicago, American Library Association, 1973).

[3]Ung Chon Kim, "Purchasing Books from Publishers and Wholesalers," Library Resources and Technical Services 19 (Spring, 1975), 133-47.

was conducted by sending 32 identical orders for in-print, trade publications of major publishers in the social sciences to 4 wholesalers and the appropriate publishers. The data collected showed that the average delivery time was 18.2 days for publishers; 31.5 days for Baker & Taylor; 53 days for Richard Abel & Company (since taken over by Blackwell North America); and an average of 32.9 days for 2 local vendors. A comparison of costs showed that the average publisher's discount was 8.6 percent, with a great amount of variation; local vendors gave slightly better discounts than publishers; Baker & Taylor's average discount was 13.5 percent; and Abel's average price was actually greater than the average list price due to handling charges added to short-discount items which more than counterbalanced discounts given.

In the process of Kim's study, a formula was developed to determine the relative efficiency of a book supplier by using the factors of discount, delivery time, importance of price to the library, and urgency of delivery to the library. In using this formula, it was determined that using a well-selected wholesaler is generally more satisfactory than dealing with publishers, but that service must be evaluated objectively on a regular basis.

Kim also concluded that libraries may greatly benefit from a source of information about publishers when ordering directly. To this end, a directory of publishers was created showing addresses, any special requirements and policies,

discounts, and standing order plans of about 400 of the publishers most widely used by libraries.[1]

Another statistical study was done by William B. Rouse at the Tufts University Library.[2] In this study, the techniques of decision analysis were used to draw conclusions about the discounts and delivery times of three wholesalers and appropriate publishers for book orders divided into trade and non-trade items and rush and non-rush items. The names of the wholesalers studied were not disclosed. It was concluded that publishers should be the preferred suppliers for rush items, both trade and non-trade, and that two different wholesalers performed best with other trade and non-trade items.

Other more subjective and less current discussions of the book-ordering process, which are still valuable, include the following--

Fleming Bennett's survey of public and university libraries of varying sizes across the country found that 52 percent of the academic libraries used jobbers for more than 65 percent of their orders; 14 percent ordered directly from publishers in more than 65 percent of the cases; 29 percent divided their orders about equally between these

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[1]Ung Chon Kim, Policies of Publishers (New York, Scarecrow Press, 1976).

[2]William B. Rouse, "Optimal Selection of Acquisitions Sources," Journal of the American Society for Information Science 25(July/August, 1974), 227-31.

sources; and 5 percent ordered primarily through bookstores.[1]

One of the best of the many articles which discuss the advantages and disadvantages of ordering through jobbers is Eric J. Bromberg's account of his acquisitions experiences.[2] Like Bromberg, Martin Ruback[3] and J. B. Kaiser[4] point out the problems which jobbers have in dealing with libraries. Some of these problems are caused by a wide variety of special instructions which must be followed for different libraries and by incomplete and inaccurate bibliographic information provided on orders. Other problems are caused by publishers giving false reports on the status of publications and by uncertain publication dates.[5]

Probably the most controverrial report in this area is J. J. Veenstra and L. L. Mai's "When Do You Use a Jobber?" which describes Purdue University Library's positive experience in dealing only directly with publishers in acquiring

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[1]Fleming Bennett, "The Current Bookmarket," Library Trends 3(April, 1955), 376-84.

[2]Eric J. Bromberg, "How the Birds (Pigeons) & Bees & Butterflies Do It," Special Libraries 61(April, 1970), 168-70.

[3]Martin Ruback, "We Can Get It for You Wholesale--with Help," Library Journal 87(February 15, 1962), 730.

[4]J. B. Kaiser, "What Wholesalers Think of Library Customers," Library Journal 84(February 1, 1959), 369-70.

[5]"Survey of Wholesale Book Purchasing," Library Journal 84(February 1, 1959), 365-70.

scientific and technical material.[1] Evelyn O'Beirne-Ranelagh also reported a positive experience in dealing only with publishers in her Air Force base library.[2]

John S. Davidson, on the other hand, argues that the proliferation of paper handling and variety of problems in dealing with large numbers of suppliers makes direct ordering impractical for the majority of library orders.[3]

A. S. Pickett offered another alternative in book ordering with an account of satisfactory results in acquiring books for San Francisco State College Library from local bookstores.[4] This alternative was not explored in the present study since there is no supplier of the scholarly materials which make up the greater part of the library's orders within a convenient distance of the library.

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[1]J. J. Veenstra and L. L. Mai, "When Do You Use a Jobber," College and Research Libraries 23(November, 1962), 522-24.

[2]E. O'Beirne-Ranelagh, "Librarian Makes a Case for Ordering Direct," Publishers' Weekly 205(January 14, 1974), 84.

[3]John S. Davidson, "Direct from the Publisher," Publishers' Weekly 178(July 11, 1960), 40-41.

[4]A. S. Pickett, "Experiment in Book Buying," Library Journal 84(February 1, 1959), 371-72.

CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

Population and Sample

Information for this study was gathered from copies of orders which were accumulated as materials arrived. These order copies, collected from January 1 to May 1, 1977, formed a population of about 3,500 elements which, since the time of collection covered an entire academic quarter, were considered a valid sample of all orders placed in recent years. Data, including the date of order and receipt, supplier, and publisher, were taken from the order copies. Discount information was also gathered for those orders for which invoices were available from April 1 to May 1. More complete cost information could not be collected due to time and manpower limitations. In the case of Baker & Taylor, it was not necessary to gather discount information since a flat discount of 16.5 percent is offered to the library on the basis of the number of orders placed.

Design

Independent variables involved in the study included types of materials ordered and suppliers used. Both of these factors were considered in analyzing the results. Dependent variables studied were delivery time and discount.

Parameters assumed to be constant throughout the study were method and time for processing orders and receipts by the library. In virtually all cases, orders were mailed on the same day shown on the order and receipts were processed on the day of arrival. Availability of material was also assumed to be constant for each publisher since almost all monographs ordered by the library are current and in-print.

Data and Instrumentation

Data studied consisted of the information described under "population and sample" along with information on publishers found in Literary Market Place. The data collection involved coding the order copies for publisher and supplier, sorting them into categories, and recording information on delivery times and discounts in each category. Measurement was in terms of days and months for delivery time and percentages for discount. These values were compared in order to make judgments on the service provided by each supplier.

Analysis

Analysis of the data consisted of finding averages or ranking the values for each of the dependent variables divided by type of publisher for each supplier and comparing these results. The statistical analysis was accomplished with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences computer program.

The results of this analysis are displayed in the following tables. Table 1 shows a summary of statistics concerning the average number of days from order to delivery for each of the library's major sources of monographs--Baker & Taylor, Blackwell North America, publishers and distributors (direct orders), and foreign vendors. Statistics on foreign vendors are presented for informational purposes only since no comparison can be made between them and domestic sources.

It should be noted that one source of possible error in these data is the fact that any reports given by suppliers on orders prior to their delivery were disregarded. This may have unfairly lengthened times of delivery, especially when publication of ordered works was delayed. On the other hand, delays connected with some reports may not always be justified. These factors may cancel each other, but an alternative method would be to disregard any orders on which reports had been given.

Mean and median delivery times are close in all cases except for those of direct orders, indicating that a few especially lengthy delivery times have raised the average considerably.

Another important statistic in this area is that of standard deviation. The very small figure for Blackwell North America in comparison to the other sources shows that it supplies the majority of orders within a short period of time, avoiding the extremes of the other sources. However,

TABLE 1

Summary of Supplier Performance

	Baker & Taylor	Blackwell North America	Direct	Foreign
Mean delivery time in days	69.2	45.3	35	100.1
Median delivery time in days	63.2	46.1	25.1	96.4
Standard deviation	48	14	38.9	42.6
Mean discount	16.5%	.5%	5.2%	
Efficiency factor (weight on speed)	4.3	6.6	8.6	
Efficiency factor (weight on cost)	33	1	11	

the number of Blackwell North America orders studied was small--111 as compared to 2,643 for Baker & Taylor. Therefore, this conclusion must be checked in a larger number of cases.

Next, the efficiency factors for the domestic vendors was calculated according to Kim's formula. This formula states that $REV=(AADxBI)+(\frac{1}{ADT}xUIx100)$, where REV is relative efficiency value, AAD is average actual discount, BI is budget index, ADT is average delivery time, and UI is urgency index. Ideally, average actual discount would be calculated as the relation of actual cost to list price. Since it was impossible for this study to collect the necessary amount of detailed cost information, stated discounts were used for this value. Thus, these ratings may only be taken as rough approximations. Budget index is a figure from 0 to 2 chosen by the librarian to indicate the importance of price in an order. Likewise, urgency index is a figure from 0 to 3 representing the importance of speed in delivery.[1]

The extreme cases--that is, a budget index of 0 with an urgency index of 3 and a budget index of 2 with an urgency index of 0--were used to calculate efficiency factors. The results were consistant with those expected. Baker & Taylor proved to have the highest rating with respect to cost, and publishers rated highest in terms of speed. However, these ratings, being based on averages, do not reflect the advantage which Blackwell North America may have in consistency.

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[1]Ung Chon Kim, "Purchasing Books from Publishers and Wholesalers," 145.

Tables 2 through 4 show each source analyzed as to speed in supplying various types of publishers. Type of publisher did not prove to be a significant factor in delivery time, except in the case of Baker & Taylor where there seemed to be a division between trade publishers and university presses on one hand and non-trade and non-commercial publishers on the other. It was found that 55.1 percent of trade and university press orders were supplied within 60 days, while only 20.6 percent of the other orders were supplied during this time. Chi square calculations showed a significant difference at the .001 level between these values and the expected value of 47 percent, the average for all orders.

Comparing the percentage of orders supplied within 60 days by the domestic sources, direct ordering seems to show a superiority over Baker & Taylor. Publishers supplied 88.3 percent of all orders within 60 days, while Baker & Taylor supplied only 47 percent in 60 days and 72 percent in 90 days. While Blackwell North America provided 95.5 percent of the orders studied within 60 days, this figure is misleading since substantial ordering from this firm began only recently and pending orders were not included in the study. A follow-up study would need to be done to determine whether this level of service can be maintained.

Thus, these results seem to support the hypotheses that non-rush orders from commercial publishers are best ordered through wholesalers and that rush or non-commercial items are better ordered direct.

TABLE 2

Performance of the Baker & Taylor Company

Delivery Time	All Orders	Trade Publishers	University Presses	Non-Trade Publishers	Non-Commercial Publishers
1-30 days	30%	38.7%	33.9%	11.9%	5%
31-60 days	17%	17.4%	20.2%	15.3%	20.2%
61-90 days	25%	22%	18.8%	36.7%	34.3%
91 or more days	28%	22%	27.1%	36.1%	51.7%

TABLE 3

Performance of Blackwell North America

Delivery Time	All Orders	Trade Publishers	Non-Trade Publishers	Non-Commercial Publishers
1-30 days	19.8%	9.1%	50%	35.7%
31-60 days	75.7%	87%	45%	57.1%
61-90 days	3.6%	2.6%	5%	7.1%
91 or more days	.9%	1.3%	0	0

TABLE 4

Performance of Publishers

Delivery Time	All Orders	Trade Publishers	University Presses	Non-Trade Publishers	Non-Commercial Publishers
1-30 days	59.8%	62.8%	68.8%	56.5%	59.3%
31-60 days	28.5%	21.3%	27.6%	39.1%	27.6%
61-90 days	5.6%	6.4%	21.9%	2.2%	5%
91 or more days	6%	9.6%	0	2.2%	8%

CHAPTER IV. CONCLUSIONS

Recommendations Based on Data Analysis

Based on an analysis of the data gathered in this study, it would seem that, of the sources now used, the Baker & Taylor Company provides the best service on non-rush trade and university press items, especially in terms of cost. Blackwell North America seems to provide exceptionally good service on all types of orders, although at a higher price. Direct ordering from publishers clearly provides the best service on rush orders for which price is not as important a factor as time.

It is important for the librarian to remember that no supplier can give good service without making a profit. On this basis, it is recommended that wholesalers giving high, across-the-board discounts be used only for those items which are likely to be in stock or readily available. Profits cannot usually be gained from orders for less common materials, nor can good service be provided. The librarian must accept the costs of processing direct orders or the handling charges of specialized jobbers in order to obtain satisfactory service on many orders.

Recommendations for Future Study

Because of time limitations, this study could not include all factors which ideally should be studied in order to make well-informed ordering decisions. One possibly valuable study would be to replicate Kim's Indiana University Libraries study. This would require the recording of exact charges and discounts on each order. It would also be desirable to know the cost to the library of processing each invoice in order to determine whether ordering directly, thus receiving many individual invoices, or through a jobber, thus receiving few invoices with many items, is more efficient.

Another factor which ideally would have been included in this study is that of orders cancelled by the supplier. Since suppliers sometimes fail to provide materials which are available from other sources, it would be valuable to study cancelled orders as well as those which are supplied.

Finally, an extension of this study to serial as well as monographic materials would be very valuable.

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